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| The Dreaded Formal Essay: 2nd Edition  **A Student Information Handbook for English Language Arts**  **2010**  **DO NOT LOSE!!!!** |

**OHS Formal Essay Booklet**

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**Introduction:**

Writing a formal essay is a daunting task, but it is a necessary skill for students in English Language Arts. The formal essay allows students to create an argument that may be nothing more than your opinion, but its presentation using logical, sequential arguments and evidence allows the reader of the essay to accept the writer’s opinion as fact, at least if it’s written well! Thus, the formal essay becomes a document of proof supported by evidence found within the literature studied. There are many different approaches in writing a formal essay, but the basics are formulaic and can apply to every subject, not just English. Once students learn the basics of paragraph writing, constructing a thesis, and finding evidence to support the thesis, the essay becomes an effective, persuasive product of all the information the writer discovers about the topic.

This booklet contains suggestions about how to start writing a formal essay, how to find proof, paragraph writing, citation of evidence, and basic rules to follow to ensure success. Please refer to this booklet periodically while writing your essay; it will help.

**Where to Start???**

As stated already, there are many ways to write an essay and each student will develop their own system for what works. However, if you are having problems, the following steps may help get you started, work through any frustrations and hopefully, develop a finished product. The most important piece of advice when starting an essay is: DON’T TRY TO START IT THE DAY BEFORE IT’S DUE!!!! Give yourself at least a week to wrap your head around the topic, ask questions of your teacher if necessary, refine your arguments, and ensure connection between arguments.

**Step 1:**

The very first thing that you must do is review the essay topic options. Whether you are only offered one option or ten, you must think about everything that you know about each topic. Jot some notes down about each as you brainstorm your way down the list. Then, consider the following:

1. The required length of your assigned essay. You must consider if you know enough about the topic you have chosen to reach the required length. If not, choose a different topic. If none of them are comfortable for you, perhaps you can discuss it with your teacher or there may be a topic you are interested in that your teacher will allow you to pursue.
2. While you should be writing for yourself, you should consider your reader. This means that if you discover that everyone in your class seems to be writing about the same thing, you may want to pursue a different topic. There are very few teachers who don’t appreciate a student taking a risk with a more difficult topic of study.

**Step 2:**

Once you have chosen your topic, you need to develop a ROUGH THESIS. This can be refined at a later date, but you must have some direction to follow in your research or your arguments will have no focus. Refer to the section of this booklet that deals with thesis development for more information.

**Step 3:**

Once you have a general thesis in mind, you can begin gather evidence to support your ideas. In a formal essay, evidence comprises of examples in the literature you are studying (primary sources) as well as published, peer-reviewed criticisms of the literature (secondary sources). For example, if you are writing an essay on *Macbeth*, the play itself is your primary source and MUST BE CITED and criticisms by other writers about *Macbeth* are secondary sources that can also be used to support your own thesis.

The gathering of evidence is done in a variety of ways but one thing to remember as your sift through your resources is to ALWAYS KEEP YOUR THESIS IN MIND. Your essay must maintain FOCUS throughout. You may wish to flag pages or write down quotations verbatim, but a word of warning to prevent hassles later on, is to write down the page numbers of important quotations so you aren’t trying to look for them later. At this point, it may be necessary to “tweak” your thesis to work with the evidence you have gathered.

**Step 4:**

After you have collected your evidence, it is a good idea to be able to leave it alone for a day or two. This doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t think about it, but offer yourself time to create connections without feeling pressure. Once you are ready to examine the evidence taken from the literature, start to look for connections between the examples. Are there any ideas that seem to work together? If so, they can be grouped together into paragraphs.

**Step 5:**

At this point, it becomes necessary to make an outline to provide yourself guidance in your writing. What is going to be your first argument? Second? Third? What examples fit in with these particular topics? In what order should you argue your proof? How can these topics connect or transition between one another? Organize your proof into similar topics to create your paragraphs.

**Step 6:**

Write a first draft. Use a computer if you can—it makes editing so much easier. However, some like to hand-write out their draft and only type up the final. Whatever works for you is fine. Either way, you must continually refer to your outline, and always check with your thesis to ensure that you are properly focused. Don’t worry too much about grammar at this point—you can catch that in the next draft. Be sure to include an introduction and conclusion. These are often hard to create and you may have to wait until you are finished with all your evidence before you are comfortable building them. That is fine, but just don’t forget about including them!

**Step 7:**

If possible, leave your rough draft alone for a day or two, or at the very least, several hours. If you try to review it after you’ve finished writing, you are more likely to miss errors you have made because you are too used to looking at it. You need to distance from your essay in order to make it better. Fresh eyes will catch mistakes that you have made that you would otherwise overlook. That being said, don’t leave it for too long or you’ll forget what you were trying to accomplish and it will be too hard to get back into it.

**Step 8:**

Print out your rough draft. It is time to PROOFREAD and EDIT your essay. Understand that proofreading and editing are two completely different skills and needed to be treated differently. Proofreading is checking for grammatical and mechanical errors like spelling and punctuation. Editing is an analysis of your work; you review the content for clarity, cohesiveness, thoroughness and style. **FOLLOW THE RULES OF A FORMAL ESSAY FOUND IN THIS HANDBOOK TO HELP YOU WITH YOUR EDITING.** You then make additions or subtractions to your essay that strengthen the final product or even re-organize the entire thing. Unfortunately, you may even need to re-write large sections of your rough draft if you realize it doesn’t follow your original path.

**Step 9:**

Once you have proofread and edited the rough draft, you create a new copy. Again, you may want to leave it alone and then look at it again to make further changes to help strengthen your work. Continue to do so until you are satisfied with your work

**Step 10:**

Ensure that you have a cover page and a Works Cited page with the appropriate bibliographic information, hand in the completed final draft ON TIME to your teacher and, voila, you are finished! Congratulations.

**How to Write a Thesis Statement:**

**What is a Thesis?**

The thesis statement is a statement of belief expressed as fact and is what you are trying to prove in your essay. This is a strongly worded statement that is full of confidence yet must be free of personal allusion.

**Where is the Thesis Located?**

For a standard formal essay, the thesis is the LAST SENTENCE OF THE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH. It should not appear anywhere else in the introduction and it should be restricted to ONE SENTENCE. By having it as the last sentence of the first paragraph of the essay, it provides a clear focus for the essay as it is the last statement read before the arguments begin.

**How to Write a Thesis:**

Examine your topic. Generally, the writer takes the thesis directly from your topic question. For example, if the topic is: “Is Macbeth a hero?” at least part of your thesis must address this question. Seeing how this is a “yes” or “no” question, the options are clear and the thesis must identify your position on this statement. A very basic thesis statement resulting from this topic question could be “Macbeth is a hero.” It is not very exciting, but it would work. It is, however, somewhat incomplete, especially for a standard five-paragraph essay.

When formulating your thesis, you should also provide as much directions as possible for your reader. Thus, state that Macbeth is a hero, but briefly outline in what THREE (for a basic five paragraph essay) ways he is heroic:

***Macbeth is a hero because he \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.***

You simply need to fill in the blanks with specific examples that prove your point and your thesis is complete.

Do be aware, however, that some of the best arguments are the ones that go against conventional thinking. These essays allow you to exhibit critical and creative thinking; thinking that your marker will appreciate.

One thing that you do NOT want to do in a formal essay is create a thesis that does not take a stand. Do not argue that Macbeth is both heroic and not heroic. While this may work for the start of a dialectic essay in History, English compositions require you to fully persuade, in a formal fashion, that your thesis is valid. You may use converse arguments to highlight your position, but not to the extent that is becomes unclear what you are actually trying to prove. Be as specific as possible in your thesis:

**Some examples of bad thesis statements:**

1. I think capital punishment is wrong in Canada.
2. Child abuse is a big concern and something should be done about it.
3. Sometimes Macbeth acts heroically, while other times he does evil things.

**Some examples of good thesis statements:**

1. Capital punishment is a penalty that Canada can ill afford because it is against the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, it allows the government to “play God,” and it commits the same crime for which the punishment is death.
2. Macbeth is an anti-hero because he commits treason, subscribes to witchcraft, and loses all compassion for those around him.

**How to Write Introduction and Concluding Paragraphs:**

**Introductory Paragraphs:**

The introductory paragraph is one that creates guidance for the reader, creates interest, provides background and identifies the thesis of the essay. Students often find it difficult to write introductions, so the following provides a guideline for information to include:

1. Indicate the name of the piece(s) of literature you are using and the author(s).
2. A BRIEF summary of the content of the literature. This should be no more than a sentence or two just to set up the premise of the story or an important theme. Note, however, that the summary should lean toward the topic; it should not be random information about the novel that has nothing to do with your essay.
3. A brief explanation or definition of important concepts that may need clarification in order for the reader to fully understand the direction or content of the essay.
4. The thesis statement.

**Note: This is a guideline to an introductory paragraph, not an outline.**

**Example of an Introductory Paragraph:**

In the dramatic play, *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, by William Shakespeare, the protagonist struggles with his conscience as he pursues his royal ambitions. Throughout the course of the play, Macbeth falls deeper and deeper into the mad schemes of the Weird Sisters and contemplates actions to which he was previously impervious. As he faces this conflict and is mired in treachery, he becomes an anti-hero; the antithesis of heroic behavior. While heroes are selfless and risk themselves to help others, Macbeth’s purpose persuades him to commit vile acts of treason and betrayal. *Thus, Macbeth is an anti-hero because he commits treason, subscribes to witchcraft, and loses all compassion for those around him*.

**How to Write a Concluding Paragraph:**

The conclusion is a summary of the main points in the essay. It is a restatement of the thesis (broken out of one sentence) and contains a decisive close. There should be a “clincher” statement offering words of wisdom or lessons learned. Conclusions can be relatively short and there should be NO NEW information presented in the conclusion. Concluding paragraphs often make connections between the literature and contemporary situations.

**Essay Formatting Requirements:**

**You must:**

1. Have a cover page with the following information:
   1. A title for your essay. Do not title your essay “*Macbeth Essay* or *Macbeth*. These tell me nothing about your essay, and in the case of the second example, that is the title of the play itself, not an essay! Your title should be a two part ELA title separated by a colon. Avoid using rhetorical questions. Generally, both parts are full, independent clauses and should give the reader some indication about the thesis. For example: “The truth and lies in the character of Macbeth: How Macbeth is an anti-hero in Shakespeare’s play.”
   2. The name of the course
   3. Submitted to: Your teacher
   4. Submitted by: You
   5. Due date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** This information can all be centred in the page OR the format could be the title centred in the middle of the page and the submission information in the bottom right corner of your cover page. DO NOT INCLUDE PICTURES ON YOUR COVER PAGE!

1. You need a works cited page of all sources used. This should be in alphabetical order (based on the last name of the author). Proper format is necessary. Refer to the Information on works cited in this booklet.
2. Your essay should be in 12 pt font
3. The font should be one of the standard fonts such as Times New Roman or Georgia. Do not use the more bizarre fonts.
4. The margins should be standard set—do NOT make the margins larger in an effort to reach your page requirements.
5. You MUST QUOTE DIRECTLY FROM THE PRIMARY SOURCE and embed those quotations directly into your own sentences.
6. Length varies depending on individual essay requirements. In general, the following are average targets: Grade 10: 3 pages, Grade 11: 4-5 pages, Grade 12: 5-6 pages.

**Organization of a formal essay:**

This is for a standard five paragraph essay, but your essay will follow the same basic format even for larger ones.

1. Your introductory paragraph (including your thesis statement).
2. Your first argument with examples and proof (quotations). This first argument should be your second strongest argument (not quite your strongest, but one that you are sure you have argued well and that will impress your reader). This will give your essay a solid start.
3. Your second argument is your weakest one. This is the one that you are least confident about. Perhaps it is your shortest and has the least number of examples in it.
4. In a five paragraph essay, your third argument will be the strongest. You want to end the essay on a strong note and thereby convince your reader that you have sufficiently proven your thesis. In a longer essay, you simply stagger your arguments with the strength leading up toward your final paragraph or argument.
5. Your concluding paragraph ties everything together and restates your thesis statement while also offering a concluding thought.

**Writing Style:**

Part of your essay evaluation will include style which essentially, is how your write. Your ability to fluidly put sentences together in varied and interesting ways will keep your reader entertained and add to the persuasiveness of what you are trying to prove. While style is something that is individual to each writer, there are some things that you should be aware of to help develop your own writing style.

1. Sentence structure (syntax) needs to be varied and effective. Not all sentences should be simple sentences and compound simple sentences. You need to use complex, compound sentences and ensure that they are grammatically correct. These can be interspersed with simple sentences for impact.
2. Use varied and effective vocabulary choices. This does not mean that you need to use the biggest possible words, however, be sure to use the vocabulary that is necessary in regards to literature. Think about the language used in class. As well, some use of figurative descriptive language can indicate a higher level of writer.
3. The use of transition words and phrases also indicates a higher level of writing. Transitional words and phrases are those that show the relationship between one idea and the next. They make a connection to the thought, sentence, or paragraph that immediately follows which helps smooth the flow of the essay. Transitions also help to guide the reader as to what the writer wants them to think about the content. For example, if the word “however” is used, the reader knows that he or she must change direction in their thoughts because a contrast is being made. See the list of transitional words that follows in this handbook.
4. Write in the present tense, active voice. In the active voice is where the subject does the action but in the passive voice, the subject is acted upon. Often the passive voice uses auxiliary verbs, so if you avoid those and stick to active verbs, you will MOSTLY correct this problem. The active voice more easily maintains the reader’s interest.

**Transitions and Linking Words:**

**Transitions which can be used to show time:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| After | First | Meanwhile | Soon | Then |
| At | Second | Today | Later | Next |
| Before | Third | Tomorrow | Afterward | As soon as |
| During | Until | Next week | Immediately | when |
|  |  | Yesterday | Finally |  |

**Transitions which can be used to show place:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Above | Behind | Beyond | Into | Over |
| Across | Below/beneath | By | Near | Throughout |
| Against | Beside | Down | Off | Under |
| Along | Beside | Down | Onto |  |
| Among | Between | Inside | Onto |  |
| Around |  |  | On top of |  |
|  |  |  | outside |  |

**Transitions which can be used to compare (show similarities):**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| In the same way | Like | As |
| Similarly | Also | likewise |

**Transitions which can be used to contrast (show differences):**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| But | Otherwise | Although | On the other hand | Whereas |
| However | Yet | Still | Albeit | Conversely |

**Transitions which can be used for emphasis:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Again | For this reason | In fact | Nevertheless |

**Transitions which can be used to conclude or summarize:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| As a result | Finally | In conclusion | Hence | Consequently |
| Therefore | Last | In summary | In short | Thus |

**Transitions which can be used to add information:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Again | Another | For instance | Finally | Furthermore |
| Also | And | Moreover | As well | In conjunction with |
| Additionally | Besides | Next | Along with | Since |
| In addition | For example | Likewise | Equally important | Due to |

**Formal Essay Rules:**

The following are several rules that writers must adhere to in order to create a polished, effective paper. Please note, these are not necessarily in order of importance. They are all incredibly important to a well-written formal essay.

1. Don’t be wordy. Don’t try to fill the space with unnecessary words because in any formal writing, “less is more.” As well, don’t try to impress with big words of which you don’t know the meaning. A large vocabulary is excellent, but it should be used in the proper context and without sounding forced.
2. Write in present tense where possible. The present tense should describe literary events. The present tense is easier to read and switching between past and present tense should only be done when historically correct. Please note the following example:

*Hamlet find****s*** *the king praying. He* ***had sworn*** *instant revenge the night before, but* ***he will******achieve*** *it only by accident and about a week later. He* ***is unable*** *to act; thus, he* ***loses*** *his best opportunity.*

If you are switching verb tense and are unsure, go through your essay and underline all your verbs. Determine if you are speaking of the literary present or a historical past and assign your verbs with the appropriate tense.

1. As mentioned, write in the active voice.
2. Do not use any personal reference in your essay. This is a formal essay and your thesis is **your** opinion states as fact; therefore, it is redundant to refer to both yourself and your essay. Write your essay in third person. References to “I, me, we, us, you” are totally unacceptable in a formal essay.
3. Write in standard Canadian spelling. Often, your spell checker will be set to American spelling, so you must take the time to ensure you are spelling the words using the Canadian spelling. For example, colour, travelling, centre, hooves, etc. are Canadian spellings.
4. Do not use rhetorical questions in your essay to make a point. The purpose of writing a formal essay is to convince your reader of the facts, not to ask the reader to validate your opinion. Tell the reader the facts, don’t ask them. Incidentally, neglecting to put a question mark at the end of the sentences that asks a question, does not make it any less a question. It just makes your grammar incorrect.
5. Your essay should be written in universally acceptable English. That means: no slang, no clichés, and no colloquialisms (local idioms or slang particular to a geographical area).
6. Do not use superfluous words such as “very,” “really,” or “quite.” These are filler words that can’t be quantified. How much is “very?” Simply eliminate these words altogether or use a more effective adjective to replace. For example, instead of saying the monster was **very big**, just say that the monster was **huge**.
7. An essay is a formal document, therefore there should be no contractions (can’t, won’t, couldn’t, shouldn’t, isn’t, etc.), nor should there be any abbreviations (etc., &, lol, @). Write out numbers from 1-10 in words (seven, two, etc.). Numbers higher than 10 can be used in numerical form.
8. Acronyms (OHS, AIDS, etc) should not be used without first writing it out and then putting the acronym beside it. After the initial indicator, the acronym can be used.
9. Avoid using double modifiers in your descriptions. For example, instead of saying “The mean and nasty man,” choose one adjective because “mean” and “nasty” mean the same thing. Redundant words are unnecessary as well. For example, “**complete** stop” is an unnecessary phrase because, by definition, a stop is complete; therefore, it is unnecessary to say “complete.”
10. Do not use brackets or parenthesis unless you are quoting something directly and need to use them for citing your source or enclosing an initial acronym. If you have the urge to use parenthesis to add information to your essay, just enclose the additional info in commas.
11. Avoid repetition. Once you’ve clearly stated the concept, do not go on and on about it.
12. DO NOT SUMMARIZE THE PLOT! Assume that your reader has read the literature about which you are writing; thus, you do not need to go in to great detail about what happens throughout the entire piece of literature. Pick out what is necessary to prove your point and use that.
13. Dangling modifiers are extremely common. Be clear about what your modifiers are modifying! For example, “the robber was described as a 6 foot tall man with a moustache weighing 232 pounds.” That is a very heavy moustache.
14. Try to avoid misplaced modifiers. For example, “A small book sat on the desk that Sarah had read.” It sounds like Sarah has read the desk not the book.
15. Pronoun references need to be clear. For example, “Both Maria and Nancy loved her children.” It us unclear who the “her” is in this sentence. This happens a lot when writers use multiple pronouns in the place of proper nouns in a sentence. Simply replace the offending pronoun with a proper noun.
16. Use proper subject/verb agreement. For example: “All those **book** are great to read.” The sentence implies more than one book, but the subject isn’t plural when it should be.
17. Be sure to use the correct punctuation when dealing with possessive nouns. For example: “Sarah’s hat” and “the mens’ t-shirts.” As well, don’t use apostrophes where it is unnecessary. “The cabin’s were pretty.” There should be no apostrophe in the cabins because there is no possession. The only exception to the apostrophe rule are the words “its” and “it’s.” In this case, “its” is possessive, and “it’s” indicates the contraction “it is.”
18. Make sure that each paragraph contains ONE COMPLETE THOUGHT and that everything CONNECTS back to the THESIS statement.
19. Proofread and edit your essay.
20. DO NOT PLAGIARIZE. It is easy to get essays off the internet. Please keep in mind that if it is easy for you to find, it is easy for your evaluator to find. There are common stylistic quirks of each writer and your teacher generally knows your writing style well enough to be able to identify if it is your writing or not. If you are unsure if you are plagiarizing or not, talk to your teacher and review the sheet added to this booklet. There are academic penalties for fraud. You MUST also cite from where you get your information. Plagiarism isn’t just copying other’s work, it is also an un-cited use of ideas. If there is an idea that you did not come up with, but it works, you must cite it in the same way you would a quotation. Not using quotation marks, but a citation of outside sources, indicates that the idea you are expressing is not your own and that is OK. Just changing a few words or phrases or changing the order of the original is not sufficient to excuse you from plagiarism.
21. Check your word usage. Know and use the correct form of commonly misused words for example: they’re/there/their, your/you’re, where/were, of/have, etc.

**How to use quotations in a formal essay:**

Quotations must be used to provide proof. There are, however, quite a few things that you should remember about using quotations:

* 1. You use at least ONE (no more than 3 or 4 in a longer paragraph) quotations into each paragraph or argument. This provides direct evidence.
  2. Quotations must be ***embedded directly*** into your sentence to a point where, if read aloud, it would be difficult to determine where your words end and the quotation begins. ***Quotations* SHOULD NOT *be used as dialogue, not should they stand on their own as a sentence.*** They have to be introduced by your words to provide context for the quotation.
     1. Use signal phrases to help avoid dropping quotations into the text without warning.
     2. For example, a good use of a quotation, incorporated directly into the statement would be: With the appearance of the Ghost of King Hamlet, it becomes increasingly obvious that “something is rotten in the state of Denmark”(I.iv.90).
     3. A bad example would be: Marcellus says, “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark”(I.iv.90).

NOTE: This example uses a Shakespearean play which requires the act, scene and line number, but if you are quoting from a novel, the page number is sufficient. For example: In *Of Mice and Men,*  Lennie and George’s relationship is different because “I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you, and that’s why”(15).

* 1. When quoting, the punctuation to end a sentence or continue it should be OUTSIDE the quotation marks and the citation.
  2. In literary essays, the citation of the source is encased in parenthesis immediately following the direct quotation or information with the page number in it for novels, or the Act, scene and line number for plays. The necessary punctuation follows this.
  3. Do not feel like you have to use the whole sentence from which your quotation comes. If not all of it works in your sentence or you don’t need all the information, just use what is necessary. Citing the page number allows the reader to locate the information. You can indicate the omission of three or more words by the use of ellipses marks (…) but it’s not necessary to do so at the beginning or end of the quotation.
  4. If you need all the information and your quotation is longer than three typed lines, you need to use a different format. Right before you start the quotation, use a colon (:), start a new line, and type in your quotation being sure to indent on both the left and right sides. This should be single spaced. Return to double spacing when you are finished your quotation. When in doubt if your quotation is too long, use the longer format to be sure. Citation is the same, just the format is different.

**Works Cited/Bibliographic Information:**

You must use the format requested by your individual teacher. The specific use of a style of citation is often based on trend and teacher preference. Most ELA essays are written using MLA in-text citation, but there is a trend toward APA style.

**MLA in-text citation**

**One source:**

An MLA in-text citation is made with a combination of a signal phrase and a parenthetical reference. The signal phrase usually names the author of the source; the parenthetical reference includes at least a page number. As well, if your entire essay is ONLY on one source (novel), once the name of the novel and author have been established in the introduction, it is not necessary to put the author’s name in each subsequent citation.

Eg. Flora Davis reports that a chimp at the Yerkes Primate Research Center “has combined words into new sentences that she was never taught”(67).

**More than one source:**

If you are using more than one source, you must use the last name of the author of the piece of literature from which you are quoting.

Eg. Although the baby chimp “lived only a few hours, Washoe signed to it before it died (Smith 42).

**MLA List of Works Cited**

**For most books:**

Arrange the information into three units, each followed by a period: 1. The author’s name, last name first; 2. The title and subtitle, underlined; and 3. The place of publication, the publisher and the date. If the copyright page lists more than one date, use the most recent one. Alphabetize the list by the authors’ last names. If the information runs onto two lines, the second line must be indented.

Eg. Tan, Amy. The Bonesetter’s Daughter. New York: Putnam, 2001.

**For electronic sources:**

Begin with all the bibliographic information known with the full URL address following on the next line. If the URL address is too long to fit on one page, break it after a slash. Do not insert a hyphen.

Eg. Peterson, Susan Lynn. The Life of Martin Luther. 2002. 24 Jan. 2006

<http://www.susanlynnpeterson.com/luther/hom.html>.

If you don’t know parts of the bibliographic information, include what is available.

**APA in-text citation:**

This format is used most often for research essays in classes such as History, Psychology, Sociology, etc. It is not often used for studies in literature, but it may be the preference for some of your teachers in other courses, so the differences should be noted.

1. The source is introduced by a signal phrase that includes the last names of the authors followed by the date of publication in parentheses.
2. The material being cited is followed by a page number in parentheses.
3. At the end of the paper, an alphabetical list of references gives complete publication information after the source.

**One source:**

Eg. As researchers Yanovsky and Yanovski (2002) have explained, obesity was once considered “either a moral failing or evidence of underlying psycholopathology”(p. 592).

Note: The APA style requires the year of publication in an in-text citation. Don not include a month, even if the source is listed by month and year.

**Entry in the list of references:**

Yanovski, S.Z. & Yanovski, J.A. (2002). Drug therapy:Obesity [Electronic version]. *The New England Journal of Medicine, 346*, 591-602.

**Basic Format for a Book:**

Highmore, B. (2001). *Everyday life and cultural theory*. New York: Routledge.

**Non-periodical web document:**

List as many of the following elements as are available: author’s name, date of publication (if there isn’t one, use n.d), title of document (in italics), date you accessed the source, a URL that will take the readers directly to the source.

Eg. Cain, A., & Burrus, M. (1999, April). *Investigation of the use of mobile phones while driving.* Retrieve January 15, 2000, from http://www.cutr.eng.usf.edu/its/mobile\_phone\_text.htm

**Note:** This is the most basic information on MLA and APA formats. For more information on various types of sources (such as anthologies), you must access a reference guide. Your teacher will have some available.

**Essay Planning Sheet—do in point form**

1. **Introductory Paragraph:** (info to include is the name of the novel and author, a brief summary of the literature, definitions needed to connect to the prompt, and the thesis stmt)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Thesis stmt: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **First body paragraph: (2nd strongest proof)**

Topic statement (must connect to both parts of the thesis and the prompt): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Body Sentences ideas (examples, detail, proof—quotations):

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Concluding statement: (connect to the thesis and topic statement)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Second body paragraph: (weskest proof)**

Topic statement (must connect to both parts of the thesis and the prompt): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Body Sentences ideas (examples, detail, proof—quotations):

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Concluding statement: (connect to the thesis and topic statement)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Third body paragraph: (Strongest proof for a 5 paragraph essay—if longer, then organize by strength ending with the strongest)**

Topic statement (must connect to both parts of the thesis and the prompt): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Body Sentences ideas (examples, detail, proof—quotations):

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Concluding statement: (connect to the thesis and topic statement)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Note—for a 5 paragraph essay, jump straight to the concluding paragraph, if more length needed, continue with body paragraphs.**

1. **Fourth body paragraph:**

Topic statement (must connect to both parts of the thesis and the prompt): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Body Sentences ideas (examples, detail, proof—quotations):

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Concluding statement: (connect to the thesis and topic statement)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Fifth body paragraph: (Strongest proof for a longer essay)**

Topic statement (must connect to both parts of the thesis and the prompt): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Body Sentences ideas (examples, detail, proof—quotations):

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Concluding statement: (connect to the thesis and topic statement)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Concluding paragraph:**

Topic sentence: (reconnect to the prompt)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Body Sentence ideas: (a broadening of the thesis statement—can be split from one sentence into many—and a BRIEF summary of proof. DO NOT include new proof/info. Statements should lead to a generalized conclusion about the prompt)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Clincher statement(a statement that goes beyond what you have said in your essay and makes a final impression on the reader; a clincher about lesson learned; or connection to contemporary issues or beliefs. Try to avoid clichés.)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Formal Essay Writing Checklist**

**Re-read your essay and ensure the following:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Check/Yes** | **Rules to look for** |
|  | Have you proofread your essay for glaring grammar and spelling errors? |
|  | Have you edited for additional info or cut superfluous info that lacks connection? |
|  | Is your thesis decisive and clear? |
|  | Does your thesis FULLY CONNECT to the prompt? |
|  | Is your essay written in the third person and refrains from personal reference? That is, there are no references to “I, me, we us, you.” |
|  | Do you use at least one transition sentence for each paragraph? |
|  | Do you write in the present tense? |
|  | Do you write in the active voice? |
|  | Have you omitted all “very, really, quite”-type words? |
|  | Have you refrained from asking rhetorical questions in your essay? |
|  | Have you omitted all examples of slang or clichés from your essay? |
|  | Have you eliminated all contractions from your essay? |
|  | Have you eliminated all use of parentheses and brackets (unless used as part of citation)? |
|  | Have you eliminated all abbreviations? |
|  | Have you eliminated all repetition (part of editing your essay)? |
|  | Do all of your paragraphs contain ONE COMPLETE THOUGHT? |
|  | Have you avoided SUMMARIZING THE PLOT? |
|  | Are your quotations embedded smoothly into the flow of your own writing? |
|  | Are your quotations properly cited? |
|  | Do you have a cover page and works cited page? |
|  | Do your topic statements and concluding statements FULLY CONNECT to your thesis/prompt (FOCUS)? |
|  | Have you examined the rubric to see how you will be evaluated? |

**By the time your essay is fully polished, everything should be checked off here as a “yes.”**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**ELA Formal Essay Evaluation**

**Introduction:** contains a hook, is thoughtful, and provides insight and guidance to the reader to indication the direction the essay will follow. Any definitions needed are identified and explained.

0 1 2 3 4 5

**Thesis statement:** is a strongly worded statement that clearly provides sophisticated reasoning, creative thinking, and focus for the arguments to follow. Must connect FULLY to the prompt.

0 1 2 3 4 5

**Paragraphing:** the topic and concluding statements are DIRECTLY connected to the thesis, is enticing, and offers direction to the reader; concluding statements tie in an offer transition.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Quotations:** are embedded fully into the flow of the writer’s words without acting as dialogue, lists, or standing alone as a sentence. Quotations are applicable and offer support to the argument.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Content:** ideas are insightful and well-considered. There is a strong central focus and knowledge of the subject matter. There is literary appreciation evident, and also an attempt at higher level, creative thinking. Little or no repetition or plot summary.

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20

**Connections/Unity of argument**: ideas are present with frequent, yet original (not formulaic) reference to the thesis. All parts of the prompt and thesis are evident throughout the essay and connect continually

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Style:** The writer’s voice maintains the reader’s interest. Uses 3rd person point of view, active voice, and present tense. The rules of a formal essay are followed; no use of slang, clichés or colloquialisms, contraction, rhetorical questions, unnecessary words, etc. Diction is vivid and precise with competent use of transitional words and phrases. Syntax is varied and effective; it is a polished essay. At the same time, it isn’t all style with no substance; there is a purpose and coherence to the syntax and diction.

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20

**Mechanics:** Writing demonstrates a strong command of language; control of longer, complex sentences and correct usage is evident. Errors are due to risks taken with the language; no glaring spelling or grammar mistakes.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Conclusion:** The conclusion restates the thesis, offers an effective summation of evidence provided and presents and clincher statement that effectively ties off the essay.

0 1 2 3 4 5

**Organization and Documentation:** the structure of the formal essay is evident; there is parallelism of arguments and an obvious effort to ensure that the essay ends on the strongest argument. It is well edited and put together. It contains a proper cover page with title, quotations are cited properly and a works cited page with appropriate formatting.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Overall Impression:** Everything connects well, the argument is engaging and well established; the writing is sophisticated and polished while keeping the reader both focused and interested. All in all, the essay is a delight to read and effectively proves the thesis.

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20

**/125= %**

General Comments: Please refer to the notations made throughout your essay!!!!

**Analytic Scoring Guide**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **5 (9-10)** | **4 (7-8)** | **3 (5-6)** | **2 (3-4)** | **1 (1-2)** |
| **Content (10)**  1 longer and 1 shorter or max. level 3  Only 2 work, max level 3  Only 1 work, max level 2  No works, 0 | Ideas are insightful and well considered. Strong central focus and exhibits unique comprehension and insight. Carefully chosen evidence. Sophisticated reasoning and literary appreciation | Ideas are thoughtful and clear. Clear and recognizable focus and exhibits a comprehensive and intimate knowledge of the subject matter. Literary interpretation is more logical and sensible. | Ideas are straightforward and clear. Recognizable focus and exhibits adequate development of content, although interpretation is more commonplace and predictable | Ideas are limited and overgeneralized but discernable. Inconsistent or wandering focus and, although is exhibits some development of topic, ideas are often superficial and supporting evidence is vague or weak. | Ideas are elementary and may not be clear. This piece of writing lacks focus and coherence and shows little or no development of topic. What is there is generalized and unsupported, so that there is little evidence of understanding. |
| **Organization (5)**  Fewer than required number of paragraphs, max level 4  Only planning box, max level 2 | The writing exhibits evidence of careful and considered planning. Introduction clearly states the direction the essay will take and invites further reading. Ideas are clearly and coherently developed and show evidence of critical thinking. | The writing exhibits evidence of clear planning. Introduction provides direction for the reader and the ideas generally focus and sustain the topic. Ideas are developed clearly and the conclusion effectively completes the essay. | The writing exhibits evidence of some planning but would benefit from additional planning. The introduction provides some direction for the reader and the ideas are usually focussed, but show little imagination. Ideas are clear but may lack coherence. The conclusion offers little insight. | The writing exhibits some evidence of order but little planning is evident. The introduction is weak and relates only marginally to the body of the essay. There is no focus and the ideas are not clearly developed. The conclusion provides no real purpose. | Evidence of planning before or during the writing phase is not apparent. The introduction, if there is one, does not contribute to a discernible controlling idea. Development of the topic is meager or superficial. The conclusion, where present, is unclear or unrelated to the development provided. |
| **Style (5)** | The writer’s voice and tone consistently sustains the reader’s interest. The writer has chosen appropriate details and established a definite point of view that enhances the writing. Diction is clear, vivid and precise. Syntax is varied, effective and polished | The writer’s voice and tone maintain the reader’s interest. The writer has established appoint of view and a sense of audience, and shows awareness of language and structure. Diction is effective. Syntax is generally effective. | The writer’s voice and tone establish, but may not maintain, the reader’s interest. The writer’s point of view is clear and consistent and shows a basic understanding. Diction is adequate but somewhat generalized. | The writing exhibits superficial and/or minimal awareness of the reader. The writer’s point of view is unclear and the choice of diction is imprecise and/or inappropriate. Control of syntax is limited and result in lack of clarity. | Awareness of the reader is not apparent. The writer’s point of view may shift in a confusing way. Diction is inappropriate and unclear. Syntax is confusing and results in unclear writing. |
| **Mechanics (5)** | Sentences are correct. Any mechanical errors are the result of taking a risk with more complex or original aspects of writing. The writing demonstrates a strong command of the conventions of language. | Sentences are substantially correct, with errors only in attempts at more complicated constructions. The few mechanical errors do not impede communication. The writing demonstrates a solid control of the conventions of language. | Common and simple constructions and patterns are correct. Errors in more complex or unusual constructions do not unduly impede understanding. Information is clear despite a faltering in mechanics. The writing demonstrates a general control of the conventions of language | Sentences having uncomplicated structures are usually clear, but attempts at more difficult structures result in awkwardness and/or obscured communication. The writing demonstrates a limited and/or inconsistent grasp of the conventions of language. | The writing exhibits a lack of knowledge in the use of sentences structure, usage, grammar and mechanics. The profusion of structural and mechanical errors makes communication very difficult. The writing demonstrates only an elementary grasp of the conventions of language |

**Note: Insufficient= no evidence of an attempt to respond to the topic OR the response is too short to warrant a mark (score of 0)**

**Conclusion:**

Writing formal essays is a difficult task but one that does improve with practice. If you follow the guidelines in this handbook, you should be able to achieve success in this endeavour. Don’t give up and ask questions of your teacher if you are unsure of something. If you require additional planning sheets, be sure to ask for them.

Good luck!